

Submitter: Stephanie Carino
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or LC 2
Topic:

Dear Chair Beyer, Chair Hudson, and Members of the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation:

My name is Stephanie Carino, a resident of Marion County. As a concerned citizen who relies on our state's transportation infrastructure daily, I am writing to strongly oppose House Bill 2025 and any proposals that would impose new taxes or fees to fund transportation projects. While I recognize the importance of maintaining safe roads, bridges, and public transit, I believe that layering additional financial burdens on Oregonians is neither necessary nor fair, especially at a time when families and businesses are already struggling with high costs of living.

Oregonians are facing unprecedented economic pressures, including persistent inflation, rising housing costs, and stagnant wages for many. The proposed 6-cent increase to the gas tax—bringing it from 40 cents to 46 cents per gallon—would disproportionately harm low-income households, rural residents, and those who commute long distances for work. Similarly, the near-doubling of vehicle registration fees, a \$139 increase in title fees per vehicle, and the introduction of a mandatory per-mile road usage charge would add hundreds of dollars annually to the average family's budget. These measures, projected to raise \$791 million in the 2025-27 budget cycle and up to \$14.6 billion over the next decade, represent a regressive approach that punishes everyday drivers rather than addressing root causes of funding shortfalls.

Our state already has one of the highest gas taxes in the nation, and Oregonians have repeatedly shown their willingness to support transportation through existing revenue streams. However, trust in how these funds are managed is eroding due to reports of inefficiencies and mismanagement at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). For instance, recent analyses highlight ODOT's alternative proposals that avoid new taxes altogether, suggesting that better prioritization and reallocation of current resources could bridge funding gaps without further taxing residents. Republicans in the legislature have put forward a "no tax increase" plan as an interim bridge, emphasizing fiscal responsibility over endless fee hikes. Why not explore these options first, such as auditing ODOT's spending, delaying non-essential projects, or leveraging federal infrastructure funds more effectively, before resorting to measures that could stifle economic recovery?

Moreover, these new fees risk exacerbating Oregon's affordability crisis. Small businesses, which form the backbone of our economy, would face higher operational costs for fleet vehicles and deliveries, potentially leading to job losses or price increases passed on to consumers. Rural communities, already underserved by public transit, would bear the brunt of higher driving costs without viable alternatives.

At a time when many Oregonians are choosing between filling their gas tanks and paying rent, we cannot afford to make life harder for those who can least afford it. I urge the committee to reject HB 2025 and any similar proposals during the upcoming special session. Instead, focus on sustainable, non-tax solutions that rebuild public trust and ensure efficient use of existing revenues. Oregon deserves a transportation system that works for everyone—without demanding more from our wallets.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Carino

Salem, Oregon